1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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Kusase

Kusase, being founded by the ruling class. Timoni, another settlement, now included among and talking Kusal, are really Buls' (Builsa).

My informants stated that the Nabt of Kugri, who taboo the heart of an animal, and the Nabt of Timpale, who taboo a fish, formerly did not intermarry but now do so. I was also informed that at Pusig' there is a clan (?) called Narem whose totem is *naf zur* (a cow tail), but that these people, though now talking Kusal, were formerly Bimoba.

From the above it would appear that we had here among the Kusase, two endogamous clans, Zuos and Nabt, a third having been lately added by the breaking away of a branch of the former which had acquired a sub-totem, i.e. the fish, while other clans which may be found in this area are those introduced by the influx of other tribes, Bimoba, Builsa, and Mampruse. In other words, there are signs of the dual organization having existed there. Proof of this supposition must, however, await a fuller and more minute investigation. A parallel to this will, as we shall see later, be found among a neighbouring tribe, the Tampolense (see Chapter LVI).

The blood-related kindred-groups found among the Nankanse, &c., also exist here, being known as *sog*. Again we find the taint of witchcraft transmitted only down this line. 'If your mother "cannot see", if your mother is "blind", all her descendants through the female line are also blind. This relationship is called *sog*. *Soe* is a witch. To "see" is a bad thing. In old days if we found a witch we wanted to tie him up and beat him until he died. You cannot leave a person who is eating people; he will spoil the world. As the Elders sit and converse at night, they will see a fire flickering *ta ta ta* at some compound, and when some one dies, the *baa* (soothsayer) will find out that there is a witch in that compound. Many people can "see" but do not eat people. The children of witches are the beautiful women whom men love the most. In olden times when a witch killed your child or "brother" you would want to kill him, but others would beg you to forgive him.'

Traditions of the Kusase: 'When the Mampruse came from Gambaga, they found us here. In old days we only knew *Tenedan*' and had no *Na* (Territorial Ruler). We have always been here. Even when we move about in the locality and overtake some other people, we sacrifice to the land. *Tenedan' da moro ti* (the *Tenedan*' had us), we did not know what is now called *Nam* (Chieftainship). When anything happened, we all met and gave him (the *Tenedan*') things to sacrifice and thus gained life and grain. The *Tenedan*' had power; when any one refused to obey him he would strike the land (*nwe tey*) and that person would

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611 theoretically, without limit. In short, people of common uterine descent are socially identified with one another; but they do not form a corporate group.

611 The social recognition of the uterine line entails not only that *saarət* have defined ways of behaving towards one another, but also that the 602 fact of matrilineal descent is given an institutional embodiment. Matrilineal descent confers distinctive social attributes on people. In this Tale culture follows the rule found in most West African cultures that recognize both lines of descent.[1] The dominant line of descent confers the overtly significant attributes of social personality—jural status, rights of inheritance and succession to property and office, political allegiance, ritual privileges and obligations; and the submerged line confers certain spiritual characteristics. Among the Tallensi it is easy to see that this is a reflex of the fact that the bond of uterine descent is maintained as a purely personal bond. It does not subserve common interests of a material, jural, or ritual kind; it unites individuals only by ties of mutual interest and concern not unlike those that prevail between close collateral kin in our culture. While it constitutes one of the factors that counterpoise the exclusiveness of the agnatic line, it does not create corporate groups competing with the agnatic lineage and clan. Carrying only a spiritual attribute, the uterine tie cannot undermine the jural and politico-ritual solidarity of the patrilineal lineage.

Uterine Kinship and the Notion of Witchcraft

754 The critical spiritual attribute carried by the *soog* line is the potentiality of being a witch (*sɔi*, pl. *soob*—a term evidently cognate with 602 *soog*). This potentiality adheres only to the female line and defines that line in social terms. 'This is my *soog*' a person usually says when introducing a uterine relative. 'If he (or she) flies magically (*ayat*) I, too, fly magically; if he sees magically (*nye*) I, too, see magically.' The potentiality of being a witch is hereditary in the female line. A woman's son and daughter may both become witches if she is a witch. If a person is accused of being a witch, all his or her *saarət* are automatically suspect of this inborn mystical vice. His agnatic kin are not implicated, not even his own father or his half-siblings by the same father. These are the points Tallensi invariably stress, both among themselves and in answer to an inquirer, if they are asked to define the meaning of *soog*.

754 It is significant that witchcraft occupies a minor place in Tale mystical thought and ritual action, and that is one reason why the Tallensi make no secret of its hereditary transmission in the female line. They

[1] Cf., e.g., R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti*; C. D. Forde, 'Kinship in Umor—Double Unilateral Organization in a Semi-Bantu Society', *American Anthropologist*, xli, 1939.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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have no clear notion of witchcraft, no detailed theories of its mode of operation, and no institutionalized means of combating or sterilizing it. A witch (*sɔri*) is supposed to fly about (*u ayarəme*) at night in the guise of a ball of fire; she—for the Tallensi tend to think of a witch as a woman, though they say that men may be witches too—is supposed to be clairvoyant, to 'see (*nye*)' hidden things. She can recognize fellow witches, foresee death coming to a particular person, prophesy an epidemic, and so forth; she may be beneficent, able to impart luck to a person in a mysterious way, or maleficent, killing people by eating (*ɔb*) their souls (*sii*). This is the sum of Tale ideas about the nature of witches. Actually, these qualities make up what is mainly an imaginary stereotype. One never hears of particular individuals being credited with the socially useful qualities or being suspected of possessing the anti-social qualities attributed to witches. Witchcraft is only attributed to people *ex post facto*, when an event occurs for which an explanation in terms of witchcraft is sought.

Witchcraft is something on the fringe of Tale mystical thought and ritual values. I have more than once heard elders of the most conservative way of thinking, to whom the native scheme of ritual values is the most important thing in life, declare roundly that there is no such thing as a witch. Though the Tallensi do not put it into clear words, they obviously feel that the idea of witchcraft is a mixture of superstition and folk-lore, and not a part of the system of mystical and ritual values that really matters for the conduct of life. Of course, superstition and folk-lore are not wholly negligible. Circumstances occur, now and then, in which people fall back on the idea of a witch's occult aggression in order to cope with anxieties and frustrations that are normally neutralized through the agency of the ancestor cult; and then a particular person may be accused of being a witch. Significantly, in every case that has come to my notice, some dating back twenty or thirty years and all of them together numbering less than ten, the accused has been a woman. Most accusations of this sort are in the first instance made by women against co-wives, and are symptomatic of the tensions inherent in the joint family.

An accusation of being a witch is the private affair of the accused's husband and his maximal lineage, her paternal family, and those of her *saarət* who are in touch with her. In former days, if the accusation was confirmed by a diviner, the accused might insist on undergoing the arrow ordeal (*kuh ɔ-peema*), or be compelled to do so by her husband's lineage and her *saarət* in order to prove her innocence. She had to stab herself with a poisoned arrow in public at the same time as a branch of a *keŋkaŋ* (Ficus) tree was plucked; and if she were guilty, it was believed that she would die before the branch withered. But it is characteristic of the Tale attitude to witches that a person who died thus was accorded a proper funeral—unlike, for example, a person who

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754 602 [593] dies of small-pox—and that the decision was not accepted as conclusive by her *saarət* whom it directly implicated. A proven witch's uterine kin, her children in particular, felt the shame for a time, but they were not publicly stigmatized or penalized. Even the husband of an apparently guilty woman would, judging by what happens nowadays, very often continue privately to believe in her innocence; and if he admitted her guilt would not allow this to influence his relations with his children by her.

754 574 602 The public attitude to a witch nowadays is illustrated by the following case which occurred during my stay among the Tallensi. A young man from Yinduuri went to visit a kinsman at Moyaduur. Arriving at his kinsman's house, he was offered some cold porridge by an old woman of the house who happened to be the only person at home. Now, cold porridge is not a dish to offer to a guest. The poorest native would blush with shame if he had nothing better to put before a visitor. But in this instance the young man was weary and hungry after a long tramp. His kinsman was not at home to offer him more seemly hospitality and the old woman had nothing else. So he accepted it gladly.

754 627 787 Later in the day, on his way home, the youth was suddenly taken ill with what soon proved to be acute dysentery. He at once thought of the old woman's cold porridge and told his family of this when he reached home. Next day he died. Thereupon his father accused the old woman of having bewitched the youth through the medium of the cold porridge, and so caused his death. Her unconventional hospitality and the sequence of events seemed to leave no doubt about her guilt. There was, it is true, no obvious motive, but this was not taken into consideration. Indeed, as one man remarked, the youth was himself partly to blame, for no self-respecting adult would eat cold porridge at someone else's house. However, the old woman was sent for and the matter submitted to divination. As the dead youth's clansmen had no doubt about her guilt, it is not to be wondered at that the diviner declared her to have bewitched him. In vain she protested her innocence. The head of the youth's maximal lineage told all his people to mock (*wool*) her with a derisive chant. Neighbouring clans took up the chant, as she passed on her way home, and some weeks later it was made the theme of one of the dance songs of the Golib Festival. 'Wherever she goes', my informants said, 'men, women, and children will look askance at her and jeer at her for being a witch. Shame and grief will dog her, and she will pine away and die.' It was for fear of this kind of public ostracism that anyone accused of being a witch in the old days insisted on undergoing the arrow ordeal. [626]

754 [771] The main reason why witchcraft is of minor significance in Tale mystical thought is because the elaborate ancestor cult and the Earth cult deal adequately with most social and psychological tensions in terms consistent with the total social structure. The idea of witchcraft is not

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The idea of witchcraft is not

easily reconcilable with the structure of Tale society, dominated as it is by the patrilineal principle. As we know,[1] the residential unit is based on the agnatic lineage and the local community as a whole is based on lineage grouping. Most corporate and co-operative activities depend on lineage ties. The notion of maleficent secret malice involved in the idea of witchcraft is incompatible with the structure of the localized lineage. The occurrence of witchcraft within a lineage would poison the mutual confidence of agnates, disrupt their corporate relationships, and so throw social life into confusion. As it is, the pegging of witchcraft to the uterine line serves to circumvent any danger it might be to the community. An accusation of witchcraft does not implicate the lineage. It is an individual matter, and other individuals on whom it might be expected to throw suspicion are scattered through various lineages and clans. They may protest, but they have no means of taking organized action in defence of their reputation. In any case, an accusation of witchcraft has a very limited range of reaction. Other lineages and families than those injured by the alleged witch do not feel the injury, and even if they harbour uterine kin of the accused person, self-interest prompts them to disregard the implications of the accusation. The folk-lore of witchcraft provides loopholes for such adaptations of logic to social realities. Some say, for example, that a person only becomes a bad witch if his or her mother gives him or her 'witch's medicine' to eat in infancy.

The hereditary transmission of the capacity of being a witch is not connected with the blood (*ziem*), according to Tale physiological ideas. Both parents transmit their blood to their offspring, as can be seen from the fact that children may resemble either parent in looks. It is solely a matter of the eye (*nif*, pl. *nini*)—not the physical eye but the inner, clairvoyant eye of the witch.

Uterine Kinship and the Notion of Tyuk

The social definition of uterine descent in terms of the notion of witchcraft is consistent with its functions in the structure of Tale society. The meaning of *soog* to the native is neatly symbolized in this notion. And this is true, also, of the only other attribute of social personality that is held to follow the uterine connexion. This is summed up in the concept of *tyuk*.

A person through whose words or actions fighting that leads to the slaying of a man or men is instigated bears a particular kind of mystical responsibility. The slaying of a man gives rise to a chain of mystical blood-guilt, and the person who bears the guilt of instigation may have been an unwitting agent and unaware of his guilt. Supposing, for example, I summon a man from another settlement to come and see me about something, and on his way home he meets a man to whom he owes a debt. Supposing the two men have an argument which ends in

[1] *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. x.

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and adds prestige to the occasion, to the widows, to the old women tending the corpse, and to the girls dancing extravagantly in honour of the dead.[1]

A son-in-law should help to dig the grave and to carry the corpse to the grave, or depute a clansman to do these tasks on his behalf. These duties are undertaken readily and with pride, as a rule, whether or not a man has been on good terms with his deceased parent-in-law, though there are no sanctions for enforcing them. Men perform them as a mark of respect to their affines, both to the dead and the living, and it would be a serious affront, causing friction with his living in-laws and deep resentment on the part of his wife, if they were neglected. In addition, there is the incentive of personal satisfaction, for they give a grand opportunity for self-display. The mourning party he brings, his largesse, and the conspicuous assistance he gives at the burial, are all means of showing off his personal importance and his excellence as a son-in-law.

A son-in-law is obliged also to send certain food contributions of prescribed kind and quantity to the funeral of a parent-in-law. Small contributions accompany the mourning party. The principal contribution is due on 'the day of sleeping at the funeral (*kogbedaar*)'. This consists of a sheep or goat cut up and ready cooked, together with a large basket of slabs of porridge and a pot of relish. Unlike the duties previously mentioned, these food contributions are 'debts' (*samər*, pl. *sama*)—i.e. obligatory gifts. If a man cannot pay any of them when they are due, he must do so whenever he is able to; and if he omits to do so altogether before his death, his son will have to settle the debt. For here a sanction that operates in many social and religious obligations of the Tallensi comes into play. If a man dies without paying a ceremonial debt of this kind, then, in accordance with the principle of equivalent returns, he must be done by likewise. *His* son cannot accept the same food contribution from *his* son-in-law until the debt is paid; and this is felt as an affront to his spirit. His son would therefore take steps immediately to set the matter right. In fact it appears to be very rare in normal circumstances, for a man to omit these duties altogether during his lifetime.

Conversely, if a man's daughter or his son-in-law dies, he in turn sends a mourning party to represent him and convey his condolences. He is also obliged to send certain customary food gifts. But these are small in quantity; for though they represent a return in kind for what is due from a son-in-law in like circumstances, they are made by a superior to an inferior, by one who has already conferred a benefit that can never be

[1] The currency chiefly used on such occasions consists of cowrie shells (*laʏapielɔb*, pl. *laʏapiela*, lit. white money, the original form *laʏah*, pl. *ligəri*, being nowadays restricted to British currency), now worth only a hundred a penny. A man can be generous for a shilling, and prodigal for half a crown.

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fully repaid in the bestowal of his daughter as a wife. A similar sanction to that mentioned in the case of a son-in-law operates here.

If one watches the behaviour of men at the funeral of an affine, one can see that they feel themselves to be under strong constraint. They and their clansmen accompanying them keep together, and when there are no ceremonies or festivities in progress they stay apart from the rest of the crowd. In former days a mourning party of affines always carried arms, and it is said that fighting sometimes broke out at funerals. When Tallensi comment on the ceremonial obligations of affines, they emphasize the feeling of constraint associated with them. One is impressed by the contrast between this attitude and the attitudes associated with the ceremonial obligations that follow on the death of a clansman or cognatic kinsman. It is as if the native feels his ceremonial obligations to an affine to be forced on him from outside, without his choice, whereas he seems to accept his duties and obligations on the death of a kinsman willingly and from within.

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It is evident that reciprocity between affines is different in character from that which prevails between people who have a bond of common interests, such as members of the same family. There is not the same free give and take. When gifts or services pass between affines, whether they are prescribed or ostensibly spontaneous, there is a deliberate effort to counterbalance them. A sort of book-keeping occurs. This appears most clearly in the jural formalities of marriage, but it comes out quite plainly in the apparently voluntary services and reciprocal hospitality of son-in-law and father-in-law. The side that benefits feels impelled to make an equivalent return in order not to give the other party grounds for a grudge. And people who flout this convention not only upset their good relations with their affines and so provide pretexts for conflict with them, but also incur the censure of public opinion.

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One incident will illustrate this. Banɔrəg asked his son-in-law, a member of an adjacent clan, to come and help him finish the hoeing of his home farm. The young man brought a couple of his clansmen and they worked with zeal from early morning till sunset. Then they went home, politely refusing Banɔrəg's invitation to come home with him for the evening meal. Had they come as a formal hoeing party they would have been entitled to a good meal as a reward at the end of the day. But they had come informally, and their own homes were near enough for them to get back in time for the evening meal. They spoke of their day's work for Banɔrəg as a simple act of courtesy to a father-in-law. As we watched them saunter homewards, Banɔrəg said to me 'Sons-in-law are shy (*deenam mmar vi*). They can't come home with you (their father-in-law) and eat with your children (as if they were your kin)'. But next day Banɔrəg sent a large basket of millet flour to his daughter with orders to cook a generous meal for her husband and his friends. He would feel ashamed, he told me, if he did not 'thank' the young men

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resignation that was touching in the circumstances, that he missed his mother dreadfully. When she was alive, he explained, he never went to bed hungry. She always had something for him to eat even in the leanest times. But nowadays he often slept hungry; for his other 'mothers' had their own children to think of; in times of scarcity they would put aside extra food for their own children but not for him. At best he might get the scraps.

The genealogical and social differentiation of a woman and her children from every other woman and her children of the same domestic family is the kernel of the notion of uterine (*soog*) descent. The cultural definition of this notion gets its psychological content, its meaning for the individual, from the relations of mother and child and co-wife to co-wife.

To every woman, therefore, her own children are the most complete incarnation of her own social self, of her autonomy and status in the family, and of the differentiation of her *dug* from those of her co-wives. That is what the concept *soog* means for a mother in relation to her children. Emotionally wrapped up in them as she is, she becomes almost anarchical in her concern for their welfare. There are women who resent it strongly if a co-wife scolds one of their children; and it is quite common for a woman to get into a fury if her child is struck by a co-wife's child, let alone by a co-wife herself. Many quarrels between co-wives begin in this way. That is why children are taught to keep out of their mothers' co-wives' rooms as much as possible and to behave carefully if they go into them.

The ever-present tension between co-wives, reduced to a minimum at most times, occasionally bursts out acutely. This is liable to happen if a child gets ill of a malady that defies all attempts to cure it, the more so if it is an unusual sickness of sudden onset. The distracted mother is likely then to turn on a co-wife (another wife of her husband, or a wife of one of his brothers) whose own children are well and happy and therefore the bitterest reminder of her evil fortune. Being co-wives the women are sure to have had differences and even quarrels in the past. So now the sick child's mother accuses her co-wife of being a witch (*zɔi*) and of having caused the illness of the child. Infrequent as accusations of witchcraft were in former days and are now, Tallensi say that most of them were made by women against a co-wife owing to the illness or death of a child. This is the more significant in view of the association between witchcraft and uterine descent. An accusation of witchcraft brands a woman and her children equally, but it does not impugn the male line or, consequently, the *yir*.

When hostility between co-wives reaches this pitch it cannot but result in a serious disturbance of the unity and cohesion of the family. Formerly, as we have learnt, the accused woman might have been compelled to undergo the arrow ordeal, or would herself, backed by her

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for him by the lineage of the ancestress who has demanded the erection of the shrine. The diviner-to-be is himself a 'sister's son (*ahəŋ*)' or 'grandson (*yaaŋ*)' of the men who come to perform the ceremony of establishing the shrine. But in addition, a member of his clan who is also an *ahəŋ* of the visitors' clan is deputed to act as intermediary. He goes out to meet the visitors when they approach and escorts them to the homestead of the diviner-to-be; and he acts as spokesman for the latter throughout the ceremony. Thus he formally 'shows' (*paal*) the visitors the beer and the fowls and the goat that have been provided for the ceremony and acts as mediator if there is a disagreement about the amount or quality of these provisions. In the ritual situations that make up the ceremony the visitors sit together in a group and the diviner-to-be and his clansmen sit together in a group. Between the two groups sits the selected *ahəŋ*. As is customary in all such situations, the two parties do not address one another directly. They address the intermediary, who 'passes on (*zaŋ ti*)' what was said to the other party.

Similarly, if a dispute occurs between segments of different clans, for instance over the abduction of a wife, the injured group might send one of their members who is a 'sister's son' of the abductor's clan, with a message of protest and a demand for the return of the wife. An *ahəŋ* is the appropriate person to act as go-between in negotiations between different clans. In the system of clanship ties, it will be remembered, intercalary lineages are sometimes credited with being the agnates of one clan and the 'sister's sons' of the other.[1]

As has been suggested, Tallensi maintain that an *ahəŋ* acting as an intermediary in inter-clan transactions is bound to be equally faithful to both parties. This does not mean that an *ahəŋ* is always equally loyal in sentiment to both his patrilineal and his matrilateral—especially his immediate maternal—kin. Tallensi say that when there is a clash of interests a man will always side with his patrilineal kin while endeavouring, if possible, to refrain from bringing harm on his maternal kin. The behaviour of an *ahəŋ* in war between his and his mother's brother's clan is a case in point.

But there is a belief which suggests that the loyalty of an *ahəŋ* to his mother's brother's lineage may, in some circumstances, outweigh his loyalty to his own clan. In the old days of warfare, it is said, if a man was killed in fighting, there was a way of taking vengeance on the slayer by means of sorcery. The arrow that slew the victim was extracted, and the clan and lineage of the slayer were ascertained. This was easy. Every inner or medial lineage of a clan usually has a distinctive mark (*daan*). One lineage, for example, may tie a tiny guinea-fowl feather at the base of the arrow-head, another may use a particular species of grass. By inquiring from their soróral kinsmen in the enemy clan the victim's lineage brothers soon discovered which lineage the slayer

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, pp. 44 ff.

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604 613 754 belonged to and who he was. The method of sorcery was to dip this 'evil arrow (*peembier*)' secretly into some food or drink the slayer was about to take. If this was done he would die. The problem then was to find someone who would carry out this task. It could not be done by any of the victim's clansmen since it required intimate contact with the slayer's family.

578 604 613 754 If there was a daughter of the victim's clan, or better still, inner lineage married to a member of the slayer's inner lineage, she might be persuaded to do it. Such an action would be a grave sin, for which the woman's husband's ancestors would punish her with death. But sometimes women hate their husbands so much in their hearts, Tallensi say, that they will risk anything to injure them and their clan. And if the dead man was a close agnate of the woman, she might put vengeance for his death above her duty to her husband's clan. Alternatively, an *ahəŋ* of the victim's inner lineage or clan, who is a member of the slayer's inner lineage or clan, might be persuaded to undertake the commission. Only a man who had a deep grudge against the slayer would undertake so wicked an action for which the clan ancestors would certainly punish him with death. But enmity between clansmen, even between brothers of the same inner lineage, is not unknown; and as Tallensi often assert, the belief that the ancestors may punish an action with death does not always restrain an unscrupulous man. Whether or not this act of sorcery was ever carried out I cannot tell. It is impossible to obtain verifiable information on a point of this sort. But what is of interest is the belief itself. Assuming that it is founded on fantasy, it still suggests that the loyalties of an *ahəŋ* are felt to be more evenly divided than is conventionally admitted.

604 578 There is other evidence for this view. The Gəlibdaana of Tɛnzugu earned the hostility of most of the maximal lineage and clan heads of the Tongo district by his high-handed drive to aggrandize himself.[1] In public his opponents had the support of practically all their clan or lineage elders. But amongst them there were, in every clan, one or two private sympathizers of the Gəlibdaana. The usual explanation was that these men were 'sisters' sons' or 'grandsons' of his inner lineage or clan. One of the Chief of Tongo's most trusted and devoted elders used to visit the Gəlibdaana regularly. Another elder of the chief pointed out to me, in explanation, that the first was an *ahəŋ* of the Gəlibdaana's inner lineage. He quoted several other men who were *ahəs* of the Gəlibdaana's inner lineage and maintained close contact with him. It was through them, he added, that the Gəlibdaana kept himself so well informed of everything that happened at Tongo, even of matters that should not be known outside the chief's family. He admitted that the Chief of Tongo probably had similar contacts with the Gəlibdaana's faction and kept himself informed of the Gəlibdaana's activities in the same way.

[1] Cf. *Dynamics of Clanship*, pp. 251 ff.